



The Envelope



mystery

noire

guns

 127  3  8

Chapter 1 by Sub-Reality

Two in the shoulder and some shrapnel in my ribs. My arm's numb. Bullets whiz over my head and crash against the overturned table I'm leaned against. Dust and smoke flood the air.

I blind fire two shots over my cover. Doesn't do much good, but it keep 'em at bay. I find the cigarette I had lit before the blast and poke it between my lips.

Warren is behind the diner counter, hastily shoving shotgun shells into a smoking sawed-off.

"Who are these guys, man?"

Warren clacks the barrel closed.

"I don't know, but they just blew the front off my favorite diner. Reason enough for me to hate 'em."

He peaked around the counter and blasted both barrels towards the diner entrance. I hear glass shatter and what I would imagine is the sound of a guy losing his face.

"You hurt, Vic?"

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"Only the arm I use to play

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Warren dodges a napkin holder shot off the counter top.

"Give me some suppressive fire"

I wait for an opportunity, pop up, and unload a clip in the direction of a black SUV outside as I see Warren grab the strap of an AK-47 of a downed gunman on the floor.

I slide back behind the table. Warren slides me the AK.

"Give me a distraction," He says, disappearing into the kitchen. He must be going through the alley way. I'll keep their attention. I set the AK on the counter, butt end to my shoulder and unload on them, sweeping across the entirety of the storefront. Unaimed shots blast past me. I duck back down.

Three big shots blair out from the alley way. I hear footsteps walk towards our direction of fire and one more shot.

"Alright, Vic, we're good."

I come out, stepping over dead gunmen and glass fragments.

"Who were they?"

"Probably hired. Don't look the Aguila or Italian mob type."

"You still got it?"

He opened jacket and touched the inside pocket.

"Yep."

"I'm thinking our guy we were supposed to meet set us up."

"Mhm."

I winced at my arm, now immobile.

"Let's go see Doc," Warren said wryly.

What a way to start a day.

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Chapter 2 by abandned_molecule



My shoulder ached like a bitch, and the jostling of Warren's vintage car made it even worse. Though he had made a bandage of sorts to contain the blood flow, it felt like I was being slowly drained from the inside - my shirt and the leather seats were completely ruined.

Warren looked over at me from the driver's seat.

"You sure you're okay, Vic?" he asked. Again.

"The only thing I'm worried about right now is dying in a damn car crash 'cause you too your eyes off the road, man."

He chuckled and shifted his attention to the road again, but his grim expression spoke volumes. The wounds, though initially did not appear threatening, starting bleeding fast and hard. It had only been ten minutes since the last shot had been fired, and I had already lost feeling in my entire arm.

I was also craving another cigarette real bad.

With Warren driving, I had to be on the look out for any more shooters, or any possible threat. I held Warren's automatic in my other hand under a blanket on my lap, ready to fire at the smallest sign of danger - at least, that's what I told myself. The blood loss was making me faint, and that was never a good sign. I felt Warren slap my face a couple of times on the way, and I was never happier when he announced that we arrived at Doc's place - through the back entrance, of course.

Doc's clinic was a quaint, not-for-profit establishment run by a group of young, bleeding-heart medics and students who thought that they could help everyone in the entire world - and Doc was definitely one of them, though not the worst.

Warren looked at me one more time through the rearview mirror.

"I'm gonna go get Doc now."

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Normally, I would've come up with a sarcastic reply, but right now I was too weary to do anything but nod weakly.

In a matter of moments that felt like agonizing years, Warren and Doc got me on a spare stretcher and into Doc's personal office at the back. Both of them stripped by shirt off as fast as they could, impeded by my bad arm. I tried discerning my fate by looking at Doc's expression as my wound was revealed, but as usual, it was completely stoic. A perfect poker face.

Within the next few hours, the shrapnel was removed, the wound was cleaned, everything was stitched up and bandaged neatly - and I didn't feel a single thing because of all the painkillers in my system. Doc got an old shirt of his for me to wear while Warren threw the old one away.

Once I was feeling marginally like myself again, I sat up and got to my feet.

"Thanks, Doc. Wouldn't have made it without you."

Even at my full height, I only made it up to his chin, and Doc used every one of those extra inches to look down at me with his usual mixture of exasperation and pity - an expression that I had grown to recognize and loathe over the years. It was also an indication that he was about to say what he was really feeling, and those generally didn't go so well.

My fingers itched for a cigarette.

"You wouldn't even be here if not for your bullheaded conviction to go through with this. If it were up to me, I would have burned the damn thing years ago and not looked back, not even once! Your misplaced sense of loyalty and duty is why the two of you have a price hanging on your head right now." By the time Doc got to the end of his tirade, he was visibly shaken, his face flushed and fists clenched tightly.

Warren, who had been silent all this time, spoke, his voice quiet and low, but the menacing tone underneath it was perceptible.

"Be very careful of what you say son. Like it or not, your father had a role to play in this entire affair, and that responsibility has become ours. It's something we can't ignore in our lives."

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He paused, making sure every word seeped in.

"Do I make myself clear, Doc?" The stress on the moniker that John Maddock Jr. had earned from his dad could not have been more pronounced.

Doc's poker face was back on in an instant, the signs of his outburst all gone except for the slight flush in his cheeks. He reached for his prescription pad and wrote out a set of medications in a flurry and handed it to me.

"Take these for the next couple of days, and call me if things get worse. You should be fine for now, but you need to change the dressing regularly to prevent an infection."

I barely suppressed the urge to roll my eyes.

"This ain't my first rodeo, you know," I said, searching in my pockets for a spare cigarette. Warren snorted behind me.

"I know. But with all the madness surrounding you, I thought you'd need the reminder."

Something in Doc's tone made me look at him. He looked as weary as I felt, and I could see the lines in his forehead and around his mouth. All of a sudden, he looked much older than his twenty-seven years. He looked so much like his father at that moment that I felt like I was looking through a portal to the past.

"Drop by the diner sometime. We haven't seen each other apart from these meetings in a while," I said, not knowing what prompted me to do it. Doc looked confused at the gesture as well, but nodded his acceptance.

"You two might want to hold off on that for a week or two. Those guys made some serious dents in the furniture," Warren added, clapping Doc on the shoulder as he left the clinic.

Warren and I got back in the car, this time with me in front next to him.

"So what do ya think we should do next?" Warren asked as he drove out of the building's parking onto the road, flooring the accelerator.

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"You still got it, right?"

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"Yep."

"Good, 'cause I know exactly where we need to go."

Chapter 3 by ROHIT NAIR



"Don Vitolo, please...spare me.....I knew not.....they told me they had done this stuff before.....please.....I have a family..."

"Plead as much as you want Vince, its of no use. You have failed me. Sonny...*portalo viauccidilo*"

Sonny nodded and grabbed Vince by his jacket." Come on Vince, time to say goodbye."

Vince was kicking around in desperation,"Please.....mercy...per favor....." Two more of Vitolo's henchmen came forward and held him tight. "So how do you want to do it Sonny..Pop him in the head ??", they asked.

Sonny looked at Vitolo....Don Vitolo..*Just like my father would do it*, "We choke him and drown him in the river....may the fish feed on him"

Don Vitolo nodded....and that was more than enough for Sonny.

The men gagged Vince and dragged him out of the room, Sonny looked at his father once more. Don Vitolo had turned away, he was looking at the rain through the window. Sonny turned around started walking towards the door.

"Close the door while you go Sonny, I don't want the cold to get in." Sonny turned around, his father was looking at him straight in the eye. He could see the loathing his father had for him. It was there in his eyes, those old eyes with all the wrinkles. *The eyes that saw everything.*

"Si padre..",Sonny closed the door behind him.

He had never really come out of his father's shadow. The prodigal son....that's what everyone

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"All set to go Sonny..?? I have him tied up in the boot of the car." The rain was lashing down.Sonny pulled his coat tighter. "Good, Paco you drive.....Tony keep an eye out." He got in the back of his car. He could hear the soft pounding and thudding from the boot. He checked the time, pulled out his revolver, kept it on his lap and covered it with a coat."Let's go". The car pulled out.

What was it that his father needed so desperately? Hiring people out of a ghetto to keep his name out of it was not something Don Vitolo was known for. Something fishy was going on....and Sonny had no idea about it. The heads of the families had many heated arguments over the past few weeks. He was curious to know the reason....but Don Vitolo had better things to do than to trust Sonny and tell him what happened. Whatever those two ill-fated guys had....it was something really important. Sonny never liked being kept in the dark, this time he was gonna do something about it. Something really dangerous.

"We here Sonny",Paco beamed. Sonny caught a glimpse of pistol in Paco's coat. *That's unusual. Did father allow Paco to carry arms now..?* Despite the rain they reached the bridge by the river pretty quickly.Sonny got out of the car and adjusted his hat. He put on his gloves and lighted his cigar. Paco and Tony dragged out Vince and put him front of Sonny. The rain pounded down on them. He held out a hand to Vince,"Vincenza.....get up. Don't be afraid." Tony was pulling out a rope behind Vince to choke him.Vince caught his arm like a two year old boy and started sobbing. "There there.....stop crying Vincenza.....I won't kill....you are more use to me alive than dead." Tony looked confused. Vince kissed Sonny's hand profusely and went down on his knees. Signalling Tony to throw away the rope..Sonny continued," I know father is looking for something real hard.....and you know where to find it. I am giving you a second chance.....but this time, you work for me.....you get ME the package"

"Grazie Sonny...grazie.....I will always remember this favor....me and my family" Vince was sweating. " You will remember Vince.....else you know what I'd do. I will have your family raped and killed in front of you and then I will kill you too. I am not exactly known for my kindness Vince...so you better not double cross me. And don't fail me Vince.....or next time you will surely become fodder for the fish."

Vince got up and started walking away. Tony and Paco looked stunned. Sonny pulled out his pistol and emptied an entire round into the air. Now he will be afraid. The look on Tony's face said everything. The family name was on the news reaches father. Now why don't you chuck Paco down the river. He had to kill him too." Tony nodded and bent down to pick up the lifeless body of Paco.

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Sonny felt in complete control. He had a feeling that he had not experienced in a long time.....the feeling of being in power. He had thought over his decision again and again. Vince was a useful piece to begin with, he will either get him what he wanted or get killed by those two guys for setting them up. Either ways..he had nothing to lose.Sonny had decided to play the game himself...and this time he won't back down. *The way father would have done*. He heard a huge splash as Paco's body hit the river. He pulled his coat together tighter and walked towards the car.

Warren pulled over the car and looked at Vic."Man, you sure this the place?"

"Yup...lets wait for that son of a bitch Vince to turn up. If he thinks he can get away easily after setting us up...then he is surely dreaming." Vic took out his gun. The thing they had certainly had more value than what Vic thought initially.....and the game was getting dirtier...he could just feel it in his gut.

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